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DEPARTMENT FOR AF, AF/C, INR, DRL, DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA;
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SUBJECT: CHAD: SOUTHERN OPPOSITIONIST INSISTS ON ELECTION
DELAY

REF: NDJAMENA 586 OR 587

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Leading Southern oppositionist Kamougue said April 21 that the political opposition would not be again deceived into taking a post in a Deby government, unless the election were delayed, a national conference convened, and Deby became a titular transitional president alongside a prime minister who had the real power. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Wadal Abdelkader Kamougue, leader of possibly the largest opposition party (based in Sarh) and one of the senior members of the opposition coalition CPDC, called on Ambassador Wall April 21 to make a last-ditch plea for delay of the May 3 presidential election. He said that the opposition would carry through with its call for civil disobedience and the election would offer no legitimacy to Deby's third term. May 3 was a magnet for discord in the country, and this discord would become ever more dangerous unless the election were delayed and a national conference convened to reestablish legality in the country and organize a proper election within a year or even two. Benin, he said, had shown the example of how an African country could proceed, with an independent electoral commission organizing fair elections.

¶3. (SBU) The Ambassador asked whether it might be possible, given the lateness of the date, to go forward with the election, if Deby made an overture to the opposition promising to permit it to form a government. Kamougue said that the opposition had learned hard lessons from the past, and they knew that such promises from Deby were worthless. Kamougue had often served as a minister, and as late as a year ago President Bongo had approached him (Deby hoping to sweeten the offer by having his senior colleague do the asking) to ask him to serve as prime minister. Kamougue had refused and Deby had given the job to fellow Southerner Pascal Youadimnagi. Kamougue and others in the CPDC knew well from hard experience that serving as a prime minister or minister in Deby's government meant nothing -- Deby retained total power and bypassed his ministers, stealing from the Treasury as if it were his own private trough and giving orders as if the Cabinet did not exist.

¶4. (SBU) On the other hand, Kamougue said, if this election were delayed and a national conference convened that sharply reduced presidential prerogatives, it would be possible to have Deby remain in office for a transitional period, with the country governed by a prime minister, who would hold the real power. The Ambassador asked if Kamougue believed the country would be subject to anarchy during such a transition.

Kamougue said the opposite would be true, as such a national conference would serve to bind the nation together and be a safety valve to release the mounting anger. Kamougue said he had friends and contacts among the armed rebels and he believed they could be brought along for the sake of the country. The Ambassador said that it was unfortunate that the CPDC had not made a clear statement condemning any attempt to overthrow the government by force. Kamougue noted that his colleagues Lol Mahamat Choua and Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh had both given interviews to the foreign press making such a statement, and the CPDC had met the day before and decided to issue a communique making such a statement. (Note: The communique that was issued made no such statement, but rather excoriated Deby and the French. End Note.)

¶5. (SBU) The Ambassador asked whether the opposition might be able to put forward a single candidate, if a proper election were organized. Kamougue said that Yorongar (outside the CPDC) would likely run, and there would likely be two from the CPDC. He considered himself to be the strongest opposition candidate. The CPDC had not yet discussed the issue, as there was no imminent prospect of a fair election and the discussion would be a delicate and divisive one. As for Deby's ability to capitalize on divisions within the opposition, Kamougue said that Deby's past practice of simply buying votes would no longer serve him, because the populace was fed up. Now he could hand out

money, and people would take his money, but they would not vote for him. Kamougue acknowledged that Chad was a deeply divided country ethnically and the sense of nation had diminished under Deby, but he believed a national conference would reverse that trend.

¶6. (SBU) Kamougue said that international pressure on Deby was urgent. He hoped that the advent of the senior American visitor (DAS Yamamoto March 24-25) would be the timely occasion for the exercise of that pressure. He agreed that France had an essential role to play.

WALL